

Design Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts

Fall 1989

Bud Clark's Portland

Mayor J. E. "Bud" Clark returned from the Mayors' Institute for City Design in 1988 with a renewed sense of pride in his native Portland, Oregon. Mayor Clark has always considered himself sensitive to urban design issues, but it wasn't until his experience with the Mayors' Institute that he fully recognized the wealth of what he had at home.

Portland has a long tradition of citizen participation, which has influenced the city's development. "Good Citizens are the Riches of the City," the inscription on Skidmore Fountain, is often quoted by Mayor Clark, and can be considered the unofficial motto of this city of 420,000 on the Willamette River.

Mayor Clark first got involved in civic affairs nearly 20 years ago when he helped to form the Northwest District Association. The organization fought successfully to stop a proposed freeway from bisecting their neighborhood. Mayor Clark started a newsletter to address neighborhood issues not covered by Portland's daily press.

The Northwest District Association was the first of the city's 90 neighborhood associations now in place. In the mid-1970s, Portland established an Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA) with the mandate to aid the city's community organizations. The city provides funding for these groups, however, they remain independent in their opinions and actions.

Through their neighborhood associations, Portland citizens are encouraged to participate in urban design and planning decisions. Each association produces a plan to present to the city. Residents of Ladd's



The riverfront and skyline of Portland, Oregon

Addition, a city-designated historic district, worked with Southland Corporation (parent company of 7-Eleven) architects to improve the standard 7-Eleven design, characterized by one resident as "a shoebox fronted with parking." The resulting new design was more conducive to the pedestrian-oriented shopping district they were nurturing.

Less than 20 years ago, Portland was a city in trouble; the downtown was dying, businesses and residents were relocating to the suburbs in droves. Attitudes shifted in the early 1970s. Residents began to protest many of the changes dehumanizing their city. Money originally slated for expressway construction was used instead for mass transit. A parking structure in the middle of the city's most valuable real estate was replaced with a piazza called Pioneer Square, now a hub of round-the-clock activity downtown.

Today, Portland has a deserved reputation for its model downtown. The

city's 1972 Downtown Plan experimented with physical improvements now routinely used by cities around the country: competitions for public architecture; light rail transit; preservation of historic commercial districts; and vest pocket parks. All of Portland's new buildings are planned with the human element in mind—there is a height restriction requiring that the tallest buildings be well back from the river; and every new building must provide retail space at street level. A key goal of the downtown plan was to "provide for a pleasant, rich and diverse pedestrian experience."

Building on the bold program established by the Downtown Plan, citizens initiated a Central City Plan which the City Council adopted in 1984. The Steering Committee, involving more than 10,000 Portland citizens, addressed aspects of community life not usually included in Portland planning. The purpose of the new plan was primarily to extend

(cont. on page 2)

Clark (cont. from page 1)

the Downtown Plan to the entire city.

One accomplishment that I'm very proud of," states Mayor Clark, "is the development of the convention center/Lloyd Center area." Across the river from downtown, this area has been revitalized thanks in part to Portland's groundbreaking new light rail system—known as MAX—connecting downtown Portland to the suburbs. The light rail project became the focus for regional development on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. Clark confirms that "density and development are following this spine, just as planned," striking a balance between growth and neighborhood preservation.

Mayor Clark cites neighborhood revitalization as one of the main urban design challenges in Portland. He feels that with active citizen participation, Williams Avenue Corridor, one of the city's poorest areas, can develop a neighborhood plan that addresses crime and safety issues, as well as land use planning.

Active community groups and thoughtful planning assist Mayor Clark in his job as the city's chief urban designer. After his participation in the Mayors' Institute, he returned to Portland with an increased awareness of his responsibility as mayor to be an advocate of sound urban design. "The intense two days of the institute ... provided insights creating the big picture of how the world's cities have evolved [and] how ... Portland fits into that big picture."



Mayor Bud Clark

Mayors' Institute for City Design

University of Virginia
October 22-24, 1989

For the first time, the Mayors' Institute welcomed back an alumni mayor, Mayor John Bullard (Spring 1987) of New Bedford, Massachusetts, as a featured opening night speaker.

Mayor Bullard began by asking, "Why should a mayor come to learn about design?" He answered, "As mayors, we are custodians of our cities' character. More than anyone else, we determine whether the character of our city is preserved or eroded and that is our responsibility whether we want to learn about it or not." This philosophy, Bullard said, he learned from Mayor Joseph Riley of Charleston, South Carolina.

Using New Bedford as an example, Mayor Bullard discussed ways of preserving the character of a community. He stressed the importance of a city defining its own identity. "Our challenge," he stated, "is not to be like any other place but to maintain our own character, find out what we want to be." Bullard also emphasized the importance of the city setting the standard for design excellence and raising people's expectations.

The participating mayors' case studies ranged from the site specific to the generic. Although in the past numerous design problems have focused on general downtown revitalization, this was less the case at the seventh institute. Several of the presentations were concerned with controlling and directing development through design guidelines and regulations.

Evanston's design problem was site specific. Mayor Barr is challenged with enlarging the city's main library. Discussion focused on expanding the existing structure versus

demolishing and rebuilding on the same site; programmatic library requirements and the civic role of a library in a community; and how the site relates to existing structures and the street and alley system.

Mayor Thomson's design problem is unique to Pasadena, but addresses issues applicable to many suburban jurisdictions. The city wants to create a "gateway" at a major city entry point. Several limitations exist because the intersection is the starting point for the annual Tournament of Roses Parade and has numerous requirements for television broad-

casts and spectators. The discussion dealt with the concept of a "parade street" and how the remainder of the parade route (a seven mile, primarily commercial strip) could be unified through an urban design plan.

The Reno and Tulsa case studies dealt with redevelopment sites in, or at the fringes of downtown. Mayor Sferrazza sought general advice on what type of project and building form would be suitable for a city-owned block in Reno. Discussion focused on determining the character of a

place and the significance of a city able to wait for the type of development that it wants.

Mayor Randle's problem was the development of two "raw" pieces of property adjacent to Tulsa's central business district. He would like to encourage housing development because currently there are no downtown residential areas. His questions were concerned with determining the style and scale of such housing. The discussion emphasized the importance of a neighborhood having an identity, the use of existing area building types as models for development, and the city directing the development rather than letting the "market" dictate.

Both Burlington and Newark brought case studies related to waterfronts. Burlington is faced with an underutilized lakefront with limited

MAYORS

Joan Barr
Evanston, IL

John Bullard
New Bedford, MA
speaker

Peter Clavelle
Burlington, VT

Kane Ditto
Jackson, MS

Sharpe James
Newark, NJ

Rodger Randle
Tulsa, OK

Anne Rudin
Sacramento, CA

Pete Sferrazza
Reno, NV

William Thomson
Pasadena, CA



Fall 1989 participants, from back to front: Randle, Clavelle, Robertson, Logue, Schluntz, Lee, Westfall, Porter, Sferrazza, Brown, Jacobs, Thomson, Passonneau, Ditto, James, Campbell, Abrahamson, Barr, Gallery, Lehrer. Not pictured: Rudin, Bullard

public access. The current owner, the railroad, wants to redevelop the area in a way deemed inappropriate by the city. Mayor Clavelle questioned how the city might guide or regulate the design of the development short of actually purchasing the land. The discussion addressed several legal and political issues and how they affected urban design.

Newark is experiencing new downtown development, but the infrastructure has not kept pace. Related to this, Mayor James' problem has several parts: a proposal for a waterfront festival marketplace, concentration of several commercial high-rises, and a department of transportation recommendation to widen the highway that runs between the waterfront and the central business district. Discussion stressed the importance of having a planning director who not only understands the economics of development, but the design and political aspects as well; and examples of cities that have suffered because major transportation corridors separate their central business districts from their waterfronts.

The two state capitals, Jackson and Sacramento, opened and closed the case studies. Jackson's problem addressed downtown revitalization. Mayor Ditto focused on a few blocks,

dominated by vacant lots and surface parking, surrounding city hall, the old state capitol, and the governor's mansion. He sought advice on how to bring development back into the area, and on the scale and type of development. The discussion emphasized the importance of having small parcels of land that could be developed gradually, of avoiding megastructures that would absorb the entire office rental market, and of providing downtown housing to help reduce the amount of parking necessary when all workers are forced to commute.

If Jackson's problem was the most generic in scope, Sacramento's was the most generic in detail. Mayor Rudin's presentation was concerned with a city-owned lot on the capitol mall. The city held a design competi-

(cont. on back page)

Phoenix Links Capital Planning with Public Art Program

How do you manage a public art program in a city of 900,000 people covering 375 square miles? In Phoenix, the answer was a Public Art Site Plan.

The plan, developed by the collaborative team of artist-architect Grover Mouton, landscape architect Catherine Brown and architect Bill Morrish, identifies good places for artwork in key areas of the city. Deborah Whitehurst, Executive Director of the Phoenix Arts Commission, emphasized that "the goal was to avoid placing artwork randomly around the city." Without a comprehensive plan, the city's percent-for-art program could easily have produced just that—scattered projects with little overall impact or connection to the future of the city.

What makes the Phoenix plan so unique is its identification of 15 zones for artwork that have been selected for both civic and artistic reasons. Under this plan, art is not treated as an afterthought, but is connected to the city's plan for roads, parks, buildings and neighborhoods.

Too often artists and designers are asked to create something from left-over spaces. To avoid this problem,

(cont. on back page)



"These drawings illustrate how an artist might take a look at the site, showing fragments of the city's earlier life."

Grover Mouton

CALENDAR

U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting January 24-26, 1990
Capitol Hilton, Washington, DC

MICD South April 27-29, 1990
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

MICD VIII April 29-May 1, 1990
Univ. of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

MICD Midwest May 1990
Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Phoenix (cont. from page 3)

Mouton states, "I have made sure that if any artist were asked to work in these zones, they would have suitable sites."

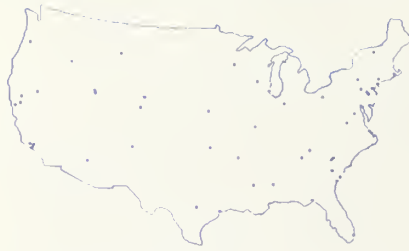
The team toured Phoenix to identify areas of intense development, unique elements that defined the city, and the living and movement patterns of its people. By taking the time to look closely at the city, it developed a plan that gives artwork a role in making the city more connected to natural and cultural patterns. Morrish noted that the environmental extremes: desert vs. oasis, hot vs. cold, considered with the city's culture and history, provide important cues for artists.

The plan will be implemented using percent-for-art funds—one percent of the total cost of all public works projects—and will be scheduled according to civic priorities. In this way, the millions of dollars spent on public improvements make a lasting contribution to the beauty and livability of the city. Now it is up to the city and its citizens to select and work with qualified artists and designers. Phoenix has built a solid base of support for good design and artistic collaborations.

Mayor Terry Goddard, who highlighted the arts plan in his presentation at Spring 1988 Mayors' Institute, says, "As a case study and model, it will be as useful to other cities and towns as it has been to Phoenix."

A publication will describe the Phoenix Arts Plan and the important civic involvement that made it possible. It was supported by a grant from the Design Arts Program to the Arizona Arts Council.

ALUMNI NOTES



A recent headline in the *Sacramento Bee* read, "Rudin ... propose[s] height limits for dome's neighbors." Following the Fall 1989 MICD, Mayor Rudin returned home with the goal of preserving the capitol precinct. Collaborating with the local state assemblyman, she has begun a public debate on the issue of height limits and design guidelines for downtown Sacramento.

■

In his opening night presentation at the Fall 1989 MICD, Mayor John Bullard updated the case study that he brought to the Spring 1987 MICD. Using some of the ideas from the institute, plans are in place to link downtown New Bedford to the waterfront by narrowing the highway and adding another intersection to improve pedestrian access. Plans have also been made for the New Bedford Heritage Park, but have been put on hold because funding is to come from the state of Massachusetts.

■

Throughout this past summer the newspapers of Lincoln, Nebraska were reporting on Mayor Bill Harris' involvement with the new master plan for downtown redevelopment. He was able to propose many of the ideas he received at the Spring 1989 MICD and see them incorporated in the new plan.

■

"Alumni Notes" will be a regular column in *CITY DESIGN*. Please share your comments, questions, and experiences so that we can stay in contact with all of our alumni and you can follow one another's activities.

BOOKSHELF

City: Rediscovering the Center, by William H. Whyte. Published by Doubleday, 1988.

By Design II. Catalogue of NEA Design Arts grants since 1976 by topic. Contact Partners for Livable Places, 1429 21 St., Washington, DC 20036

Places: A Quarterly Journal of Environmental Design. Volume 6, Number 1, Fall 1989. "The Future of Urban Open Space." Contact The Design History Foundation, 330 West 42 Street, New York, NY 10036.

Building for the Arts: A Guidebook for the Planning & Design of Cultural Facilities. Western States Arts Foundation, Santa Fe, NM (505) 988-1166

Going Public: A Field Guide to Developments in Art in Public Places. The Arts Extension Service, Amherst, MA (413) 545-2360

MICD (cont. from page 3)

tion for a mixed use project to be built on the site. Although the mayor intended to discuss the details of the entries, the roundtable discussion focused on a single issue—the fact that all four proposals were skyscrapers in a low-rise city. More specifically, all of the proposals completely dominated the state capitol, which stands at the opposite end of the mall. The other mayors and the resource faculty emphasized the importance of design guidelines and design review, particularly in a capital city. Their discussion included how to determine what such standards should be and the politics of getting them established. This presentation provided an exciting conclusion to the two intensive days of case studies.

The Mayors' Institute for City Design
1429 21 Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 659-1160
Contact: Beata Boodell Corcoran or
Mary E. Madden